

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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SUBJ: ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL, JUNE 14, 1977: RESULTS

1. SUMMARY: THE JUNE 14 ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL, CHAIRED BY UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT PETER SHORE, HIGHLIGHTED THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES IN PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN MEMBER STATES WHICH CONTINUE TO BLOCK COMMUNITY PROGRESS IN THIS FIELD. AFTER TWELVE HOURS OF DISCUSSION, THE COUNCIL AGREED TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ACCESSION TO THE HELSINKI CONVENTION FOR PROTECTION OF THE BALTIC SEA AND TO ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY PROCEDURE FOR EXCHANGE OF DATA ON THE QUALITY OF SURFACE FRESH WATER. THE MINISTERS WERE UNABLE TO REACH COMPLETE AGREEMENT ON THE FOUR MAIN AGENDA ITEMS: POLLUTION CAUSED BY PAPER PULP MILLS; WASTES FROM THE TITANIUM DIOXIDE INDUSTRY; TOXIC AND DANGEROUS WASTES; AND THE DRINKING WATER QUALITY DIRECTIVE. ALL FOUR ITEMS WERE REFERRED TO COREPER FOR FURTHER STUDY.

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END SUMMARY.

2. COMMISSION OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE FAILURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL MEETING TO APPROVE ANY OF THE MAJOR AGENDA ITEMS. STRONG DISAGREEMENT OVER EMISSION STANDARDS VERSUS QUALITY STANDARDS PREVENTED ADOPTION OF THE PAPER PULP

POLLUTION PROPOSAL. THE UK, JOINED BY DENMARK AND IRELAND, ARGUED THAT QUALITY STANDARDS WHICH TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ABILITY OF A MEDIUM TO ABSORB WASTE SHOULD BE USED. THE OTHER MEMBER STATES HELD THAT QUALITY STANDARDS AFFORD UNFAIR COST ADVANTAGE TO COASTLINE FIRMS AND ARGUED THAT EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS WERE BOTH MORE EQUITABLE AND ECOLOGICALLY PREFERABLE. COREPER IS TO STUDY THIS PROBLEM AND REPORT BACK TO THE COUNCIL.

3. THE COUNCIL REACHED CONSENSUS ON THE MAIN ASPECTS OF THE DIRECTIVE ON TOXIC AND DANGEROUS WASTES, SPECIFICALLY: PREVENTION, RECYCLING AND PROCESSING OF SUCH WASTES; PROHIBITION OF UNCONTROLLED DISCHARGE OR STORAGE AND AUTHORIZATION OF ESTABLISHMENTS FOR CONTROLLED STORAGE; AND TREATMENT AND/OR DISPOSAL OF TOXIC OR DANGEROUS WASTES. DEFINITIVE APPROVAL WAS BLOCKED BY DANISH OBJECTION TO THE ROLE OF THE TECHNICAL ADAPTATION COMMITTEE. THE DANISH REPRESENTATIVE HELD THAT THE COUNCIL, NOT THE PROPOSED COMMITTEE, SHOULD MAKE THE NECESSARY DECISIONS REGARDING ADAPTATION OF THE DIRECTIVE TO TECHNICAL PROGRESS. THAT QUESTION WAS REFERRED TO COREPER.

4. INABILITY TO AGREE ON SODIUM STANDARDS PREVENTED APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTIVE ON DRINKING WATER. THE DUTCH HELD FIRMLY TO A MAXIMUM CONCENTRATION OF 150 MG PER LITER, WHILE THE MAJORITY PUSHED FOR A 300 MG PER LITER MAXIMUM. THE COUNCIL INSTRUCTED COREPER TO PURSUE THE MATTER.

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5. THE DIRECTIVE ON WASTES FROM THE TITANIUM DIOXIDE INDUSTRY WAS REFERRED TO COREPER BECAUSE AGREEMENT ON THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL TO PROGRESSIVELY REDUCE SPILLAGE INTO SURROUNDING WATERS AND ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STANDARDS FOR EXISTING AND NEW PLANTS COULD NOT BE REACHED.

6. THE TWO NON-CONTENTIOUS PROPOSALS - ACCESSION TO THE HELSINKI CONVENTION ON THE BALTIC, AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON THE QUALITY OF FRESH SURFACE WATER - WERE APPROVED.

7. EC COMMISSION VICE PRESIDENT NATALI, WHO HOLDS THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO, SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL A PROPOSAL (DEVELOPED AFTER THE EKOFISK ACCIDENT) ON MEASURES FOR THE PREVENTION, CONTROL AND REDUCTION OF POLLUTION CAUSED BY ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE OF HYDROCARBONS INTO THE SEA. THE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN REFERRED TO COREPER

FOR STUDY.HINTON

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Message Attributes

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